

Renaissance: Paper 1

The most popular Options in the Renaissance paper were Options 2 and 3, the same as last year. One school studied Option 3 and 4. Most students demonstrated considerable familiarity with the art works they wrote about, but rather than just describing the art works and some of the influences that generated the stylistic aspects, students need to be encouraged to adopt a more questioning approach and explore the 'why' and 'how' of a work of art. This would enrich their understanding of its meaning and contextual aspects. Art works will then make more visual sense for them.

The most popular questions were No.8, the High Renaissance Portrait question and No.14, the Leonardo and Raphael Plate question.

An increasing number of students, almost half of the total number sitting the examination, answered both questions from the same Option. Many even answered questions No.4 and No.14, both dealing with space and perspective, with some students even discussing the same art works for both questions! This trend is hugely concerning as it not only jeopardises their marks but also narrows the knowledge base and understanding of the development of art ideas.

Teachers must emphasise this in their instructions to students about exam procedure.

Modern: Paper 2

The most popular Option was Option 1 with every school submitting answers, although the vast majority chose question 1, the Development of Cubism. Unfortunately many students limited their answers to a discussion of the three works they had selected. The Synthetic phase of Cubism was not well understood by some students who failed to link the transition between the use of papier colle and collage to the rather flat and decoratively painted works done towards the 1920s.

In Section B, question 13 and 15 were the most answered questions.

Only one school answered questions from Option 4 the Modern New Zealand Art component, primarily the plate question.

This is very disappointing when you consider that many art works by these artists are readily accessible in galleries and art museums. We have also been blessed with an outstanding retrospective exhibition of Rita Angus's art work. It is important for students studying History of Art to gain an understanding and appreciation of the art works of our own country.

Some general comments.

Many students struggle with understanding the requirements for answering the section B question. There are several components to this question, and some limit their answer to just the first part - the comparative analysis.

A suggestion to teachers who may be involved in evaluating/revising the structure of the examination papers, to consider changing the Section B question from an essay to smaller components such as paragraphs or bullet points, with separate mark values for each one. There could be 3 components such as -

- a) Stylistic features and content
- b) A comparative analysis
- c) Place the two works in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts

The final concern is the quality of the visual images provided, which has a direct impact on the way students tackle the question.

1. The works accessed from the internet often appear pixilated and too dark for students to 'read'. For example the Leonardo and the Raphael in Paper 1. They are printed with low resolution and not adjusted for colour and tonal values before bulk printing.
2. Several students commented on the blue colour in the background and around the border of Shane Cotton's painting. It looked appalling! It should have been cropped and the colour adjusted.
3. Warhol's Gold Marilyn, not a well known work, was totally misinterpreted by most of the students who answered that question mainly due to its colour. It should be a golden colour not a murky brown, and it was also very pixilated. The 'gold' directly refers to her cult status and the date which was the year of her death.